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Letter dated 11 June 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to submit to you a press release by the Government of Burundi regarding the statement made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, on 9 June 2015 concerning the current situation in Burundi (see annex).

I kindly request that the current letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Albert **Shingiro**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 11 June 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: French]

Government communiqué following the statements made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Government of Burundi has closely followed the statement made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, on 9 June 2015. His very pessimistic and biased statement concerning the situation in Burundi was released only a few days before the forthcoming municipal and legislative elections.

The statement denounces the behaviour of what the High Commissioner describes as the pro-Government Imbonerakure militia, the youth wing of the ruling party, which he alleges has been carrying out "increasingly violent and threatening" actions that "could tip an already extremely tense situation over the edge." The High Commissioner claims to have received accounts from Burundian refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries.

The Government is surprised that such statements by the High Commissioner always come shortly before elections are held. It will be recalled that a similar statement critical of the Imbonerakure was released at the end of his visit to Burundi from 13 to 15 April 2015, a few days before the municipal and legislative elections that were then postponed.

The Government wishes to make it known to the public that at no time did the United Nations representative for human rights in Burundi approach it to report such actions on the part of the Imbonerakure youth movement with a view to jointly verifying the allegations. The High Commissioner has likewise failed to produce a specific case that he himself might have verified.

It is similarly surprising that the statement made by the High Commissioner does not mention the return of large numbers of some refugees (over 30,000 to date) with the assistance of the Government of Burundi, as well as that of many others who wish to return but face resistance from the receiving services. It should also be noted that almost all of the civil servants who had moved to Kigali following the spreading of rumours have quietly returned and resumed their duties.

The Government of Burundi would like to point out that those who sought refuge in neighbouring countries did so in response to disinformation and at the instigation of certain members of the political elite and civil society that have already expressed their opposition to the electoral system as a means of gaining access to political power. Their accounts alone are not considered by the Government to have any credibility, especially since none of them showed the High Commissioner any traces of the violent acts to which they were allegedly subjected by the Imbonerakure before they fled into exile. Their departure from the country is more the result of speculation about political developments than of fears for their safety. Indeed, those who have returned have found that their property and homes have been well protected by those accused of having persecuted them.

The Government of Burundi considers that if there is a threat to peace in Burundi, it comes from those who foment unrest and fund violent demonstrations in which people who refused to join their movement have been taken hostage, children were deprived of the right to go to school, explosives were placed in public places, people accused of being members of the Imbonerakure were tortured and killed, their property was destroyed, and their homes and vehicles were torched along with public and private infrastructure. Anywhere else such actions would be described as terrorism.

It is, therefore, surprising that the report and statement released by the High Commissioner fails to mention such criminal acts even though they have taken place in broad daylight and been covered by the international media.

It should also be noted that there are no members of the Imbonerakure among the perpetrators of these acts of violence even though they have been subjected to numerous provocations by the demonstrators.

Given the above, the Government of Burundi denounces and condemns the position adopted by such a high ranking international civil servant, which can only further imperil an electoral process that is already threatened by political forces seeking to prevent the holding of elections and spread chaos for their own political ends.

Bujumbura, 11 June 2015
Philippe **Nzobonariba**
Secretary General and spokesman of the Government